

Jobs program needed 30 million seek work

Gallup Poll shows gov't hides real figures

People ages 18 to 29 have the highest level of underemployment, officially at 31 percent.

By Fred Goldstein

A Gallup Poll released on Feb. 23 revealed that in January 30 million workers in the U.S. were either on forced part-time or out of work altogether. This number, based on a poll of over 20,000 adults over the age of 18 and conducted from Jan. 2 to Jan. 31, amounts to 20 percent of the workforce.

Conducted by one of the most prestigious and conservative polling institutions in the capitalist world, the poll used samples taken from all regions of the country and all age groups.

No wonder this poll was barely mentioned in the big-business press. It shows that the government is undercounting millions of workers who suffer from the unemployment/underemployment crisis. It documents, at a minimum, that the statisticians in the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Bureau of Economic Research have been dishonest about the true level of unemployment.

This Gallup Poll also shows the racist disparities that have been made worse by the economic crisis. It reveals African-American and Latino/a underemployment to be 27 percent and 29 percent respectively, compared to white underemployment at 17 percent. There was nothing revealed about immigrant workers, but other studies have shown a drastic increase in underemployment among undocumented workers in particular, especially those in the construction industry.

According to government agencies, the level of what is called "total unemployment," a measurement called U-6, is only 16.5 percent, not the 20 percent revealed in the Gallup Poll.

To make things worse, it is important to know that the official government number for "total unemployment" includes not only workers who are unemployed plus those who are forced to work part time when they need a full-time job,

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Rally to stop NYC education cuts!

4-6 p.m., Gov. David Paterson's office 633 3rd Ave. (between 40th & 41st)

Then march to the MTA hearing at FIT (27th St & 7th Ave.)

Statement of Bail Out the People Movement:

The New York Governor's Office has proposed a new budget that slashes education funding and reduces aid to local municipalities.

State school aid will be cut by \$1.1 billion. This amounts to a \$469 million cut to New York City's Department of Education. It is estimated that as many as 8,500 city teachers could be laid off as a result. This would come on top of the decision by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg to close 19 public schools.

Funding to State University of New York schools could be reduced by as much as \$212.4 million. City University of New York faces an additional \$84.4 million cut. The budget would also free both SUNY and CUNY from state oversight of tuition hikes, paving the way for regular tuition increases as politicians and administrators see fit.

The state's Tuition Assistance Program is also expected to be hard hit by the budget proposal.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority has threatened to eliminate student Metrocards that provide more than 500,000 K-12 students with the public transportation they need to get to and from school.

Join Bail Out the People Movement this March 4 as we support the educators and students who will be marching from Gov. David Paterson's office to the MTA to demand:

- Stop school closings and privatization of public education!
- Stop the cuts to K-12 and higher education!
- Keep the free student MetroCard!
- Full funding for all educational needs!
- Education is a right — free, high-quality education for all!

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Centerfold

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Bail Out movement endorses March 20

By Sara Flounders
New York

The Bail Out the People Movement, meeting in New York on Feb. 24, voted to endorse and help to mobilize for the March 20 National March on Washington. The demonstration, called by the Answer Coalition, raises the slogans: U.S. out of Afghanistan and Iraq, Free Palestine, Reparations for Haiti, and Money for Healthcare, Jobs and Education. The endorsement, proposed by the International Action Center, had unanimous support and was followed by a concrete discussion of outreach, transportation and material to take to Washington.

The bi-weekly meeting of approximately 40 people included a number of students and youth focused on plans for the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Public Education.

Transport Workers Union Local 100 members raised

that there will also be a protest at transit hearings on March 4 over the latest threats to lay off 1,000 TWU members. A march will link the two rallies opposing education and transit cuts.

The BOPM meeting included a discussion of the May 1 United Worker and Immigrant Rights rally planned for Union Square and a report on the successful launch meeting of more than 100 people from 56 organizations the week before.

Members of Peoples Organization for Progress raised their campaign to oppose the closing of hospitals in New Jersey. Initial plans for the April 10 Jobs Action in Washington were also briefly discussed. The meeting ended earlier than usual so that women activists would have time to meet and discuss their plans for an International Working Women’s Month rally on March 27 at Union Square. The meeting reflected a level of intense community activism, solidarity and organizing on many fronts. □

Left Forum aims to ‘rekindle the radical imagination’

By Dee Knight
New York

This year’s Left Forum in New York City will take place March 19-21 at Pace University, near City Hall.

Titled “The Center Cannot Hold: Rekindling the Radical Imagination,” the Forum will include participants from across North America and around the world. A spectrum of left groups from this country and abroad will be represented, including social-democratic movements and parties and some from a more revolutionary perspective.

The Forum usually attracts many young people looking for socialist answers. This year’s forum, which has panels of interest to Workers World readers, unfortunately coincides with important anti-war protests in Washington.

Fred Goldstein, Workers World contributing editor and author of “Low-Wage Capitalism,” is participating this year, for the first time, in a panel together with Brenda Stokely, a founder of the Million Worker March Movement, and Berna Ellorin, chairperson of BAYAN-USA. The panel, “How to fight disappearing jobs and falling wages: labor strategies in the epoch of low-wage capitalism,” will focus on labor strategies both domestically and internationally.

Among the 17 other panels focusing on working-class struggles, one is called “Building the power of immigrant workers in NYC’s vast food industry.” Another is called “The awesome power of union democracy and its implications for dramatic social change,” which includes a member of the new leadership of New York City Transport Workers Union Local 100, as well as a leader

of the Teamsters’ UPS strike of the late 1990s.

Some 16 panels focus on student struggles. “The fight for public higher education in NYC” features Larry Hales, national coordinator of FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together), and Claudia O’Brien of the City University of New York Campaign to Defend Education. “Politics of the contemporary American student left” features Easton Smith, a Sarah Lawrence College student and organizer for UNITE HERE. Students and faculty from San Francisco State University’s Freedom School are offering “The case of California: coming soon to schools near you,” which provides an opportunity to hear from some of the originators of the new student movement.

A relative handful of panels address issues of special concern to women, but one is compelling: “Feminism seduced: how global elites use women’s labor and ideas to exploit the world.” One panelist, sociology professor Hester Eisenstein of CUNY, is well known and respected for her contributions to a Marxist approach in this field.

“Organizing against budget cuts and austerity in NYC” features representatives of Teachers for a Just Contract, a movement within the United Federation of Teachers, the largest union in New York. Other panelists include members of CUNY’s Professional Staff Congress and the Take Back Our Union grouping that recently won leadership of TWU Local 100.

There is buzz surrounding a panel sponsored by Venezuelanalysis.com, an English language online newspaper based in Caracas: “Venezuela’s proposal to launch a Fifth Socialist International.” Panelists include Clara Irrazabal of Venezuelanalysis and Vanessa Davies of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, as well as others from the U.S. social-democratic left and the World Social Forum.

The panel on “U.S. interventionism in Latin America” features the Venezuelan Ambassador to the U.S., Bernardo Alvarez. Another panel is called “Lessons from Venezuela: achievements and failures,” also sponsored by Venezuelanalysis. Other panels discuss Latin America, Indigenous Peoples, the Middle East and South Asia.

The headline speakers are Jesse Jackson on March 19 and Noam Chomsky on March 21. Other notable speakers on various panels include City Council Member Charles Barron and Pakistan expert Tariq Ali.

For more details see www.LeftForum.org. □

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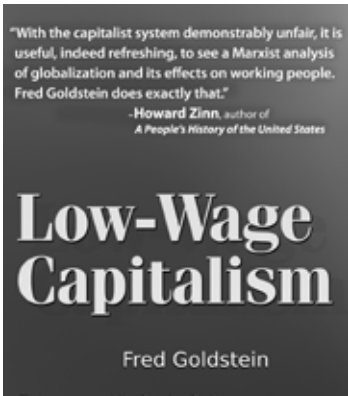
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Jobs program needed: 30 million seek work

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but also those who have dropped out of the workforce because they have given up looking.

According to AOL News online, "What's striking about the Gallup numbers is that the polls didn't even include people out of work so long they are no longer counted in the workforce." In the month of January, according to the government, 1.1 million workers were officially classified as "discouraged workers."

Thus the Gallup Poll itself is an undercount if the official government number of 1.1 million workers who have given up looking for a job is added to the 30 million compiled by Gallup.

4.4 million workers drop out

Yet the government coverup is even wider than would appear from the Gallup Poll. The Economic Policy Institute, whose former head, Jared Bernstein, is the chief economist and economic policy adviser to Vice President Joseph Biden, says: "Since the recession started in December 2007, the labor force — people who are either working or seeking work — has declined by 700,000 workers, even though the working-age population has increased by 3.7 million. The shrinking labor force is largely a reflection of discouragement with the labor market; as jobs have become scarce, many job seekers have given up looking for work."

Thus, according to the EPI, almost 4.5 million workers have dropped out of the work force, not the 1.1 million counted by the government. And among those who have dropped out, a drastically high proportion are youth. The labor force participation rate for workers age 16-24 has decreased from 59.1 percent to 54.7 percent in the 25 months since the recession started, representing a loss of 1.3 million young workers. In the Gallup Poll, people ages 18 to 29 had the highest level of underemployment, at 31 percent.

On the other end of the age scale, people over 55 have increased their workforce participation because they cannot afford to retire. In their senior years they wind up working, often forced to compete with youth for low-paying jobs.

Under "normal" conditions of capitalist exploitation — i.e., in between boom-and-bust crises, when jobs are more available — youth, and especially Black, Latino/a, Asian and Native youth, have the highest unemployment and the lowest wages. Now that there is a capitalist crisis, the crisis for youth has become massive.

The talk of "recovery" for workers of all ages is a myth. The only recovery is for the bosses, and for the biggest and richest ones at that.

The talk of a decline in layoffs was contradicted at the end of February by the announcement of a rise in first-time claims for unemployment insurance.

Unemployment claims rise, home sales drop

In its report on jobless claims on Feb. 25, the Labor Department said first-time claims for unemployment benefits rose 22,000 to a seasonally adjusted 496,000. Wall Street analysts had expected a drop to 455,000.

The four-week average of jobless claims rose 6,000 to 473,750. The average had fallen sharply over the summer and fall from its peak last spring of about 650,000. This year, the improvement has stalled. The four-week average has risen about 30,000 in the past month. It's now

well above the 425,000 level that many economists said would signal net hiring. It is a commentary on U.S. capitalism that the layoff of 425,000 workers in one week would be considered a "positive" signal of net hiring.

Furthermore, new-home sales dropped 11.2 percent in January, the largest drop in more than 50 years. A drop in new home sales spells further layoffs for construction workers.

One of the causes for the drop is the massive number of foreclosures as speculators and even some individual home buyers try to get bargain-basement prices by picking from the millions of foreclosed homes. But even with that, existing home sales dropped 7.2 percent in January.

More foreclosures are coming by the hundreds of thousands as unemployed workers cannot afford to keep up their mortgages, and even those who are employed are "underwater" — i.e., they owe far more than their homes are worth on the market.

The banks and lenders will not adjust loans, will not suspend payments for the unemployed, and are ruthlessly trying to squeeze every last nickel out of homeowners. Millions more foreclosures are in the offing unless the masses of people unite and demand an end to foreclosures and evictions.

To the 30-million-plus workers with no jobs or part-time jobs, with no health care plan, no pensions, no benefits, no vacations and the unbearable economic pressure of trying to stay afloat, the very idea that the economy has been "recovering" for six months must sound like a cruel joke.

Who will buy the goods?

One question that needs to be asked is what prompted the Gallup organization to undertake such an extensive poll? The contradictory numbers coming out of government offices and from the Obama administration have probably made sections of the ruling class nervous. Investment advisers, corporate economic forecasters, even economic policy advisers, have a large stake in getting reliable information about the economy. The ruling class cannot rely on the government agencies alone, which are bound to understate the seriousness of the situation for political reasons.

One of the few details made public in the recent Gallup Poll was how much less money was being spent in the market by underemployed workers, compared to those employed. The discrepancy between a supposed spending average of \$75 a day for the employed compared to \$48 a day for the underemployed, even if exaggerated, is a hard fact for those authorities to contemplate when considering the prospects for a capitalist "recovery."

The public heard little of the poll and most of the information



The number of workers age 16-24 has decreased from 59.1% to 54.7% in the 25 months since the recession started, representing a loss of 1.3 million young workers. They face an unemployment rate of 18.9%, are having a hard time securing jobs and are leaving the labor force in large numbers.

gathered was kept private, undoubtedly for the eyes of the ruling class and their advisers.

But the ruling class is teetering between recovery and renewed capitalist crisis. Everyone knows that the stabilization of the capitalist economy, the temporary halt to the downward spiral of the economic and financial crisis, was predicated upon the massive bailout of the banks and the stimulus to the economy.

The conventional calculations are that anywhere between 1.5 million and 2 million jobs were created or saved by the stimulus package of \$787 billion. The stimulus money is supposed to run out in the middle of 2010. Credit for first-time home buyers has now been extended to those who have previously purchased homes.

The government and bosses and bankers are waiting to see what happens when the stimulus money and the incentives run their course. Everyone is holding their breath hoping that the limited capitalist expansion now underway will keep going.

But the ruling class has a fundamental contradiction in the present crisis. It is making a profit recovery based on layoffs and intensifying the exploitation of the remaining workers. No recovery can be sustained on that basis. Only renewed crisis

can be the outcome of this course.

The working class, the oppressed, the communities, the students and youth, and all who are being victimized by this capitalist crisis must not hold their breath and wait for salvation to come from an economic recovery.

The only way out of this crisis for them is to organize and struggle with a fighting program. At the top of the agenda must be a demand for a government program that guarantees a job at a living wage with full benefits and the unhampered right to union representation for every worker who needs one.

The trillions of dollars being given to the banks, the corporations and the military can support such a program as well as guarantee a free quality education for all youth, from grade school to college. □

PROTEST SAT • APRIL 10

Washington, D.C. 12 noon (tentative) National Hearing on Jobs Crisis
Dept. of Labor Constitution & 3rd St. N.W.

San Francisco 12 noon – 2 p.m. New Federal Bldg. 7th & Mission St.

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WPA

**PROTEST
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SAN FRANCISCO
DEMAND
THE RIGHT
TO A JOB
FOR ALL!**



1,000 people march for jobs at the Pittsburgh G-20 Summit.

Joblessness is as bad today as it was during the 1930s — It's time to take the fight to D.C.

On April 8, 1935, Congress passed the legislation creating the largest public works program in history. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) created 8.5 million jobs during the Depression of the 1930s.

Let's mark the 75th anniversary of the creation of the WPA by telling the government that today's jobless crisis is as bad as it was back then and that we need the same kind of bold, sweeping jobs program that the people demanded in the 1930s — Now!

Martin Luther King Jr. dedicated the final months of his life to starting a movement for the right of all to a job or a guaranteed income—we need that movement now more than ever.

It's time to say no: to a jobless recovery — to an economy based on permanent high unemployment and low wages—to trillions of \$ for Wall St., and trillions of \$ for war but nothing but joblessness, foreclosures, evictions, layoffs, low wages, union busting, hunger and homelessness for workers and the poor.

There are more than 20 million unemployed and underemployed people in the country today. We need a real WPA-type program that is big enough to ensure that those who need work get work—work that is socially useful that pays union wages and benefits.

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10 years after victory

Dockworkers gather to honor Charleston 5

By Dante Strobino
Charleston, S.C.

More than 100 dockworkers, joined by close to another 100 unionists and community activists, gathered in Charleston on Feb. 27-28 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Charleston 5 victory. The dockworkers, four Black and one white, all members of the International Longshoremen’s Association Local 1422, had been attacked by police riding on horses, in armored cars and in helicopters while picketing a non-union ship. They were jailed on “riot” charges but later freed after a long struggle.

The activity brought together dockworkers from around the world — including South Africa, Argentina and Liverpool, England — and ILA members from ports up and down the East Coast, plus members of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 on the West Coast.

Charleston sanitation workers, who are currently in a struggle to unionize, also participated.

Ken Riley, president of ILA Local 1422, chaired most of the event. Speaking on the significance of the Charleston 5 victory, he said it’s important not to forget the union’s struggles and to embrace the support of union members from elsewhere, especially as South Carolina is a “right-to-work” state that continues its assault on the right of workers to form unions.

South Carolina’s anti-worker politicians are currently proposing a state constitutional amendment, HR 3305, that would prevent unions from being able to use card-check neutrality, stated Donna Dewitt, president of the state AFL-CIO. This is one of the major aspects of the Employee Free Choice Act that workers are currently fighting to get passed by Congress.

South Carolina is also taking measures to undermine the independence of the Employment Security Commission by folding it into the governor’s office — a move that would further erode workers’ likelihood of receiving decent unemployment insurance.



Janie Campbell, Charleston sanitation worker and acting president of AFSCME Local 1199, speaks about their efforts to win union recognition. Standing, right, is President Ken Riley of ILA Local 1422, one of the Charleston 5. Sitting, right, is Arlene Holt Baker, executive vice president of the AFL-CIO.

WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

While workers and their organizations are under attack all over the country, they are especially hard hit in the South. In North Carolina, many of the few remaining tobacco plants are scheduled to close soon. Public sector workers in North Carolina and Virginia are still in a long battle to overturn Jim Crow laws that ban collective bargaining.

This situation, in large part, goes back to the inability of trade unions to properly address racism. “The starting point of building unions in the South isn’t building unions necessarily — it is addressing the actual conditions faced by workers, like discrimination,” stated Saladin Muhammad, long-time union organizer in the South and a member of Black Workers for Justice.

“In all 12 Southern states, there are fewer union members combined than there are in the state of New York alone,” he continued. Muhammad then called for independent organizing of workers outside the trade union movement. “During the Great Depression of the 1930s, workers didn’t first build unions, they often just built committees,” claimed Muhammad. “We must build a Southern alliance to organize the South.”

AFL-CIO launches campaign for jobs

The national AFL-CIO took advantage of this important gathering and placed it in the current context of mass unemployment. It hosted a Town Hall meeting in

Charleston to announce its Jobs with Rights Now campaign. Simultaneous Town Hall jobs meetings were held in four other U.S. cities. Arlene Holt Baker, executive vice president of the AFL-CIO, was the keynote speaker at the Charleston event. Speaking of the jobless crisis, she said that “9.7 percent unemployment doesn’t even begin to tell the truth. ... The real numbers are astronomical.”

Holt Baker commented on the paltry jobs bill recently passed by Congress. “We applaud that,” she said, but it is “not big enough and bold enough to put millions of workers back to work.” She continued, “We got to be bold. ... We must even be willing to go to the streets and go to jail” to win jobs.

The only path to true economic recovery is if workers and communities continue to unite and challenge the direction of the U.S. government, which will bail out the banks and fund the wars while more than 27 million people remain unemployed and underemployed.

Unless a broad fightback grows, the state budgets will continue to get slashed, creating the justification for continued attacks on social services and the right of workers to organize unions. The struggle must continue to demand a federally funded public jobs program that includes workers’ power and living wages on the scale of the Works Progress Administration that workers and the unemployed won in the 1930s. □

On the Picket Line

By Sue Davis

UC researchers, technicians win contract

It took two years of tough bargaining and community mobilizing, but the University Professional and Technical Employees, Communications Workers of America Local 9119, won a tentative contract the week of Feb. 22 covering 9,000 researchers and technicians at the University of California. Union members gained public and community support through a media campaign and lobbied the state Legislature. The five-year agreement provides pay increases of 14.5 percent over the contract, plus an initial \$1,000 payment. Other improvements include a \$1.7 million equity pool to address pay inequities in some job categories, and the university agreed to contribute 4 percent to the workers’ pensions this year and to limit cost increases in workers’ health benefits. “This is a great agreement, especially considering the terrible state of California’s economy. We won good raises ... and will continue to fight for workers at U.C., especially in the area of job security,” said UPTE-CWA Local 9119 President Jelger Kalmijn.

Faculty file for union election in Michigan

A majority of the nontenure-track faculty at Central Michigan University filed for a union representation election on Feb. 23. The Union of Teaching Faculty, which is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and represents more than 6,500 higher education faculty in the state, will negotiate job security, salary increases, health insurance and professional development issues. Full- and part-time nontenure-track faculty teach close to half of all undergraduate credit hours, mostly in introductory courses. Not only do these highly qualified, experienced teachers earn much lower pay than tenure-track colleagues, they receive reduced benefits, have little job security, and often aren’t consulted about important departmental decisions.

Univ. of Tenn. employees fight cuts

Hundreds of university employees, members of United Campus Workers, Communication Workers of America Local 3865, rallied Feb. 25 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville to fight proposed state higher education budget cuts of \$61 million. Protesters marched to the president’s office to deliver a letter calling on the administration to look at other strategies before laying off hundreds of support staff and non-tenured faculty members. Over the past 10 years, top administrative salaries have nearly doubled to \$76.1 million, while salaries of operational support workers, including programmers, secretaries and library staff, have actually decreased. The average salary of workers slated to be laid off is \$23,500 a year. UCW represents 1,000 university workers at seven University of Tennessee campuses.

Pittsburgh passes prevailing wage law

The Pittsburgh City Council unanimously passed a citywide policy on Feb. 19 that will require developers receiving government subsidies or other tax incentives to pay the private sector going rate to building service, food service, hotel and grocery workers. The law also requires city contractors to pay prevailing wages to their workers. That has inspired workers in New York’s Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ to demand the same law in New York City, reports the Feb. 24 American City and County periodical. “Cities around the country should follow Pittsburgh’s lead and get out of the business of creating poverty jobs,” said 32BJ President Mike Fishman.

Mass. and R.I. workers vs. Stop & Shop

Nearly 40,000 members of five locals of the United Food and Commercial Workers union were set to strike 240 Stop and Shop stores in Massachusetts and Rhode Island if a new three-year agreement was not reached by midnight on Feb. 27. But UFCW announced Feb. 28 that negotiations will resume March 2 over wages, pensions and health insurance contributions. (Patriot Ledger, Feb. 28)

S.F. Labor Council supports Mexican workers

The San Francisco Central Labor Council passed a resolution on Feb. 8 denouncing the takeover of Mexico’s national energy utility last October. All 44,000 electrical workers were fired and their union crushed so that President Felipe Calderón could sell the nationalized industry to private transnational buyers. The resolution calls for the workers and their union to be reinstated and a settlement negotiated to maintain the nationalized utility. The resolution states that “the attempt to unilaterally destroy the Mexican Electricians Union, disregarding their legally binding labor contract and labor laws, is an extreme human rights violation and a threat to all organized labor in Mexico and internationally.” □

Int’l campaign says ‘Free the Morong 43’

By Kathy Durkin

An international campaign is demanding the release of 43 health care workers illegally arrested by the Armed Forces of the Philippines as they provided medical care for poor people in Morong, Rizal. Known as the Morong 43, they are being detained at Camp Capinpin, an army headquarters.

The doctors, midwives, nurses and other health care workers were participating in a First Responders Training sponsored by the Community Medicine Foundation and Council for Health and Development.

On Feb. 6, 300 soldiers and police broke their way into a doctor’s farmhouse, then lined up the

health workers, frisked, blindfolded and abducted them to the army camp. There, they have been interrogated, harassed, and physically and psychologically tortured.

Twenty-six of the detainees are women.

There is widespread support for them, including from all sectors of the Philippine healthcare community, including Filipino health workers abroad. Protests are being sent to the Philippine government from as far as New Zealand, South Korea and Canada.

In the U.S., the AFL-CIO and the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance have sent letters to Philippine officials, calling for the prisoners’ immediate release.

The World Council of Church-

es and United Church of Canada have called for their release. A delegation from the United Methodist Church (UMC) California-Pacific conference recently visited the detainees at Camp Capinpin and supported their families.

Demonstrations of Filipinos and their supporters have taken place at Philippine consular offices in Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York.

On Feb. 23 a delegation of community and religious leaders and human rights advocates went to Sen. Barbara Boxer’s office in Los Angeles to seek action on behalf of the Morong 43. They delivered petitions signed by more than 500 individuals and organizations.

Continued on page 10

New profiling: Being in your home while Black

By Sharon Danann
Cleveland

Chanting, “Drop the charges!” and “Free the Whitbys!” activists gathered Feb. 24 on the steps of the so-called Justice Center, which houses Cleveland’s police department, courtrooms and jail. Several pointed out that it is the cops — who brutally beat Rebecca Whitby in an unprovoked attack — who should be on trial, not the 23 year old and her mother, who tried to shield her from some of the blows.

Signs in the crowd called for people who have been similarly falsely accused by officers Mitchell Sheehan and James D. Bryant to come forward. The cops’ explanation for the April 23 beating is that Whitby went for their guns, which remarkably had neither her fingerprints nor her DNA. Whitby’s attorney, Scott Ramsey, is pursuing leads based on indications that this was not the first time the two officers had used this excuse for a suspect’s injuries.

Other signs at the rally proclaimed, “Cleveland’s new profiling: Being in your own home while Black,” and called on Mayor Frank Jackson to suspend the two cops pending an investigation.

Following the rally, supporters and family members of the Whitbys filled the courtroom for the start of the trial. Judge Stuart Friedman made it clear that he had been informed of the demonstration. “This is not a football match or a soccer game,” the judge told the audience. “I will not hesitate to have anyone arrested and held in contempt of court for causing a disturbance.”

Using the excuse that all courtroom seats would be needed for potential jurors during jury selection, Judge Friedman announced that the public would be ex-

cluded during this process.

Whitby was initially released from the grand jury without charges. It was not until the day after the family filed a report with the police department’s Office of Professional Standards that she and her mother, also named Rebecca Whitby, were charged with felonies.

The family also requested that the FBI examine whether what Marva Patterson, Whitby’s aunt, calls “the heinous acts of violence” by the police constitute a violation of the Whitbys’ civil rights. Despite inconsistencies in reports filed by the police and their lack of congruity with facts such as times on photos, along with racial slurs overheard by witnesses, the family has been told there is not enough evidence to prove a civil rights violation.

Patterson feels that, at the very least, the false statements, including workers’ compensation claims, are crimes for which the police should be charged. “They are being protected by the color blue,” she said.

In addition, when medical care was finally provided, the police told the hospital staff that Whitby’s injuries were self-inflicted and persuaded them to give her the powerful psychotropic drug Geodon without a prescription. Patterson states, “It is clear from the hospital records that this was done because Rebecca was already telling the nurse that the police had beaten her. She was then placed in a four-way restraint, which is not allowed for a patient who has been medicated.”

The campaign for the Whitbys is mobilizing people everywhere to put pressure on the Office of Professional Standards and on the FBI so that their reports are produced in time to help the Whitbys’ trial. Activists are asked to call Police Chief Michael McGrath at 216-623-5000, e-mail him at police@city.cleveland.oh.us

or fax him a letter at 216-623-5584. To expedite the findings of FBI agent Dan Leeper, call Special Agent in Charge C. Frank Figliuzzi at 216-522-1400, e-mail him at cleveland.cv@ic.fbi.gov or fax him a letter at 216-622-6717.

Whitby and her family have put together a Web site to explain the April 2009 incident and allow supporters to get to know her better: www.thealhambraincident.ning.com. Signing in as a member lets her know that she has support from across the country and around the world.

The police, prosecutors and judge are facing a community that sees clearly that if the Whitbys can be brought up on false charges for standing up against racist violence, then the same could happen to anyone. That is why a broad coalition of organizations and individuals have shown up



PHOTO: DAVID PATTERSON

Rebecca Whitby with her nephew, Mauriceon.

at every hearing, including members of Imperial Women, the Peoples Fightback Center, the Lucasville Uprising Freedom Network, Cleveland FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together), Books2Prisoners, Cleveland Anarchist Black Cross, Oppressed Peoples Nation, Black on Black Crime Inc., Stop Targeting Ohio’s Poor, the Cleveland Jericho Movement and the Northeast Ohio Anti-war Coalition. □

Message of solidarity Imprisoned Indigenous leader says ‘Free Mumia!’

Leonard Peltier was a leader of the American Indian Movement in 1976 when he was arrested and charged with the deaths of two FBI agents during a shootout at the Pine Ridge Reservation of the Oglala-Lakota Nation. He has now been imprisoned for 34 years — one of the world’s longest-held political prisoners. Peltier sent the following message to an international teach-in held Feb. 13 in Philadelphia on the struggle to free death-row inmate and former Black Panther Party activist Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Greetings brothers and sisters, and thank you for attending this event to listen, learn, teach and organize. I am Leonard Peltier, a proud Lakota and Anishinabe American Indian activist, organizer and patriot. I am likewise, unfortunately, a fellow political prisoner in this “land of the free.”

I, along with my family, my supporters, and American Indians everywhere, know full well what the justice system of the United States can mean to the brown man, the black man, and any man or woman who dares to think or talk truth to power.

That we have been made targets in our own country should outrage every single man and woman everywhere, no matter the color, background or political leaning. That this country continues the barbaric practices of executions should be opposed by all people of conscience.

Whether or not you approve of capital punishment is irrelevant as long as minorities are executed with alarming disparities. Whether you approve or not is of secondary concern when people like Mumia Abu-Jamal, myself and many others are convicted and sentenced to die with evidence that would exonerate most any white man. As such, every single progressive organization should oppose the death penalty as we now know it.

This has not been a case of justice or the law, it has been politics, racism and control, and we should confront these issues long before we decide who to execute. As long as we have these inequities in our midst, we will continue to convict and execute innocents. Execute — let’s

call it what it really is — state sanctioned murder! Why does America allow this brand of “justice” to exist?

That is a question that must haunt the soul of every true American patriot.

For as long as it does, America can never be the bastion of freedom it has claimed to be, the light in the darkness it wants to be, nor the high ground of morality it hopes to be.

Pay attention to the names this government uses when it is opposed. The American government has called other countries “evil empire” and “axis of evil.” The rest of the world hears this and scoffs! Why? Because they see this country convicting, imprisoning, and executing innocent minorities and political liabilities while claiming to be a free society — because they see corporate personhood allowing the rape of the Earth and desecration of the sacred — because they see this country waging illegal war while claiming to love peace — and because they see this country propping up murderous dictators while giving lip service to human rights. The rest of the world sees all of this and wonders, is not America the real evil empire?

I, like Mumia, have been called a terrorist by my own government. Well, I never knew a terrorist who advocated the rule of law as we have. Some people need to find a new dictionary!

There may be other parts of the world which are breeding grounds for terrorism, but this government makes sure they have fertile ground to harvest. We are not the terrorists! I love my country. Progressive thinking people love this country. It is thusly our patriotic duty to respond to such government with righteous indignation! It is only when we allow a corrupt government to corrupt our very minds that a patriot becomes a terrorist!

As long as you are willing to work for justice, all political prisoners can still hope for freedom. Real power starts from the bottom and goes up, not the other way around. Free Mumia!

**In solidarity,
Leonard Peltier**



Leonard Peltier



Mumia Abu-Jamal

Weatherizing program iced by budget cuts

By Kris Hamel

A report issued Feb. 19 by the U.S. Department of Energy’s inspector general revealed that one of the hallmark programs of the federal economic stimulus program has proven a dismal failure. President Barack Obama’s much-heralded plan to create jobs and save on energy costs for low-income residents through a massively funded weatherization program has fallen far short of its goals.

Under the 2009 Recovery Act, \$5 billion over three years was allocated for weatherproofing homes and apartments by such measures as improving insulation and replacing leaky doors and windows. States were authorized to spend up to 50 percent of the money they received under the program by the end of 2009.

As of Feb. 16, during one of the coldest and snowiest winters in recent memory, only 5.17 percent of the projected housing units were weatherized. In some of the largest states the percentage of homes scheduled for winterization that have been completed is even lower: 1.28 percent in Pennsylvania, 1.23 percent in Illinois and .03 percent in California. In Michigan, where DTE Energy shut off utilities to over 200,000 homes in metropolitan Detroit last year, only 1.15 percent, or 385 of the 33,410 scheduled for winterization, have been completed under the program. For five U.S. “territories” as well as two

Indigenous nations, the percentage completed is zero. (ig.energy.gov)

Inspector General Gregory H. Friedman has admitted that the lack of progress is “alarming” and stated the program has neither saved energy nor put people to work.

Ironically, because of the economic and budget crises impacting every state, the very federal program that was supposed to help alleviate unemployment and provide energy savings to low-income people cannot be implemented.

According to the report: “[B]ecause of budget shortfalls associated with the economic downturn, certain states were under hiring freezes that applied to all employees regardless of the source of their funding, including those tasked with weatherization-related work. In other states, progress was impacted because personnel involved with the program were subject to significant state-wide furloughs. Further, the approval of state budgets was delayed in states such as Pennsylvania as legislators deliberated over how to address overall budget shortfalls. Lacking staff, states were unable to perform required implementation tasks necessary to handle the large infusion of Recovery Act Weatherization Program funding. Without budgets, states did not have spending authority and, hence, were not able to obligate or expend any Weatherization Program funds.” □

Defend public education from ‘disaster capitalism’

Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) issued the following statement in solidarity with the March 4 national day of action in defense of education.

On Thursday, March 4, students, educators and community activists across the country will take to the streets in defense of public education. Students will also be demanding the cancellation of student debt and the right to public higher education.

This mobilization on March 4 will be the first nationwide mobilization since the capitalist crisis began.

8.4 million jobs have been bled by the capitalist crisis. More than 6 million people have been jobless for more than six months. Youth unemployment, for young people between 16 and 24, is at an all-time high. Millions of homes have been

foreclosed on and the rolls of the impoverished continue to grow.

And of course Indigenous, Black, and Latino people are hit the hardest, because of the particular history of the U.S., where race and class are almost synonymous.

The budget crisis is the newest tornado from the cyclonic capitalist crisis. Forty-three states plus the District of Columbia have cut their budgets. It is expected that, for fiscal year 2011, the total deficit for states will be \$180 billion, and that the budget crisis, which is expected to last until 2014, could lead to the loss of another 900,000 jobs.

Thirty-six states have cut higher education and 27 states, including the District of Columbia, have cut K-12 spending. These education cuts have led to an increase in tuition, layoffs and furloughs, cuts in pro-

grams and expanding class sizes. This will only get worse as state governments plan for new rounds of cuts with proposals for fiscal year 2011.

Along with the crisis in the states’ budgets, there is the crisis in the federal budget. The Obama administration has already announced a spending freeze on everything but the military.

Another specter haunts, though — one that cannot be tied necessarily to the budgets but definitely to the capitalist system — and that is the race to privatize public education. Bourgeois economist Milton Friedman, who died in 2006 and was a proponent of vouchers — which is all but a deceased argument — had been proposing privatizing public education for many years.

In a 1995 article for the Washington Post he laid the necessity for the privatization of the public school system on the changing global reality, that the technological revolution and the political climate necessitated the push for a “private for-profit industry.”

Though the argument for a voucher system is no longer around, since the 1990s there has been an increase in privatizing the public school system through charterization.

Charter schools are being used as the answer to a crumbling public school system. Thousands of charter schools operate around the country and wealthy forces, such as the Walton family and Bill Gates, are behind the movement.

Charter schools receive public monies and can receive private donations as well and a charter can be gotten by a community group, foundation, NGO or a group of individuals. They can operate outside of the public school system and can opt not to be overseen by the local school board.

These schools can be highly selective. They don’t have to provide special education services or English as a Second Language. Around the country they have been pushed into the same space as public schools and have ultimately pushed the public schools out, which is happening throughout the New York City area, especially in Harlem.

Charters also effectively bust teachers’ unions and on the average pay educators significantly less.

Naomi Klein, in her book “The Shock Doctrine,” exposes how disasters are used by capitalists to gain super profits on the backs of the suffering, using the disaster as the perfect opportunity to sweep in.

She uses the case of New Orleans as an example, which was the final project of Milton Friedman, who wrote about the state of New Orleans school system. Its conditions were exacerbated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Klein quotes an article Friedman wrote for the Wall Street Journal months after Katrina struck: “Most New Orleans schools are in ruins as are the homes of the children who have attended them. The children are now scattered all over the country. This is a tragedy. It is also an opportunity.”

The above is a perfect example of what Naomi Klein calls “disaster capitalism.”

There need be no other tag affixed to it, though. It is simply capitalism. Some of the most right-wing foundations, such as the Heritage Foundation and the Bradley Foundation — which poured millions into a campaign to dismantle welfare during the Clinton administration — champion privatizing the public school system.

Billions of dollars are spent on public education and the bankers and financial institutions salivate to get their hands on it.



Jonathan Kozol, in an article titled the “Big Enchilada,” writes about reading a stock market prospectus. “A group of analysts at an investment banking firm known as Montgomery Securities described the financial benefits to be derived from privatizing our public schools. ‘The education industry,’ according to these analysts, ‘represents, in our opinion, the final frontier of a number of sectors once under public control’ that ‘have either voluntarily opened’ or, they note in pointed terms, have ‘been forced’ to open up to private enterprise. Indeed, they write, ‘the education industry represents the largest market opportunity’ since health care services were privatized during the 1970s.

“Referring to private education companies as ‘EMOs’ (Education Management Organizations), they note that college education also offers some ‘attractive investment returns’ for corporations, but then come back to what they see as the much greater profits to be gained by moving into public elementary and secondary schools. ‘The larger developing opportunity is in the K-12 EMO market, led by private elementary school providers,’ which, they emphasize, ‘are well positioned to exploit potential political reforms such as school vouchers.’ From the point of view of private profit, one of these analysts enthusiastically observes, ‘the K-12 market is the Big Enchilada.’”

Privatization has never made anything better. The capitalist system exists to make profit off exploitation and the products produced under capitalism are only for those who can afford them. The privatization of public schools will not only threaten the livelihood of education workers but of students and will resegregate the public school system and further indoctrinate young people for certain positions in life and with the most backward beliefs.

To fix the public school system, the monies used to service debt to the banks, to bail out the banks and that go to wage imperialist war and plunder and for prisons has to be used for social needs.

Young people around the world deserve new schools, the best equipment and the best opportunities and that can only be guaranteed under a new system, one without the profit motive.

All out for March 4! All power to workers and students! □

Hales hits ‘University of Capitalism’

Larry Hales of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) facilitated a workshop entitled the “University of Capitalism” at the Black Student Activism Conference held at New York University on Feb. 27.

The workshop’s stated aims were to “discuss the ways in which we can turn our profit-seeking corporate educational institutions into organizations that train students for community activism and investment.”

Hales discussed plans for a national day of protest on March 4 on educational issues, including the privatization of education from kindergarten to graduate school. About 15 of the 100-plus students at the conference contributed to a lively and informed discussion of the issues.



Their comments integrated the students’ personal experiences with an overall view of the capitalist drive to privatize education and restrict it to a narrow elite group of students. They particularly protested this policy’s harmful impact on the African-American community.

— Report and photo by John Catalinotto

Help to publish: ‘What is Marxism all about?’

World View Forum is publishing this guide for activists that explains Marxist terminology in non-technical language. Terms like “imperialism,” “self-determination” and “socialism” are defined and illustrated. The Marxist definitions of these words help sharpen an understanding of society from a working-class perspective.

The book, which was first published in the 1970s as a pamphlet, has been revised, updated and edited by young activists in Fight Imperialism, Stand Together — FIST. It gives relevant analysis about the conditions faced by millions of people in capitalist society today, as the economic crisis hits working and oppressed people, including students and youth.

It is also a guide to action. This book is a must-read for students and youth organizers involved in the many struggles going on today across the country. Its short, concise chapters make it very usable as an organizing tool as well as for discussion groups, classes and meetings.

FIST organizers are committed to getting this new edition of “What is Marxism all about?” to student and youth activists nationwide.

Your help is needed! All aspects of writing, editing, proofreading, cover and book design were done by voluntary labor. However, printing and binding costs are high, causing us to turn to readers and activists for financial support.

Your contribution to print this book will make a difference! **Everyone who donates \$20 or more will receive a copy of “What is Marxism all about?”**

Yes! I want to help with publishing costs.

Here is my donation of ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$35 ☐ \$20 \$ ____ Other
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Trail of Dreams

Trail of Dreams, a grassroots immigration reform group that has been staging a protest walk from Miami to Washington, came through Atlanta on Feb. 27. The walkers, led by young activists from Miami, started out on Jan. 1 and intend to join a national immigrant rights demonstration in the U.S. capital. Their main demand is to be treated with respect and dignity. In Georgia they have marched through towns where the Ku Klux Klan has come out to spread its vile racism and through counties where the sheriffs use their power to deport immigrants without papers. Nevertheless, they have picked up supporters along the way — local people have walked with them and attended the fiestas they hold at the end of each day. About 150 people walked with them in Atlanta. Their website is www.trail2010.org.

UCSD students, allies mobilize against racist attacks

By Bob McCubbin
San Diego, Calif.

Racist students on the San Diego campus of the University of California recently organized and publicized a sickening social event. Emboldened by increasingly common racist rants on the part of corporate media talking-heads, the coded racist outbursts of right-wing politicians, and the historic policies of discrimination and repression directed against communities of color and immigrant workers all across the U.S., they made no effort to disguise the racially offensive character of their “Compton Cookout” party, which took place on Feb. 15.

Compounding the offense, and clearly demonstrating that it was in no way “an isolated event,” several days later the student-run television station aired a defense of the racist social event that included a racial slur. Additionally, the student who took public responsibility for the original event defiantly announced a second “cookout.” And then on Feb. 25, a noose was found hanging on the seventh floor of the campus’s main library.

As word of the original event spread locally and nationally, the initial official and unofficial apologetics (it was “off campus,” “protected speech” and even “a harmless spoof”) gave way to promises by the school administration to work for a better climate of “respect for diversity” and the announcement of an administration-sponsored, campus-wide teach-in on Feb. 24. The outraged campus community, however, wasn’t waiting for belated band-aids at a school whose African-American student enrollment constitutes only 1.3 percent of the total school undergraduate enrollment of 23,143.

Students marched and gathered the day following the offensive campus TV program to confront UCSD Chancellor Marye Anne Fox and other school administrators. Earlier that morning, while searching for a tape or digital file of the offensive TV program in the station studio, they had found a piece of cardboard with the words “Compton lynching” written on it.

Black students at the meeting with the chancellor stated that they feel neither safe nor welcome at UCSD. Their leaders issued a list of 32 demands.

Titled “State of Emergency: The UCSD Black Student Union Address,” the preface to the demands states, “Students in general feel isolated and unsupported, which



San Diego students protest racism on campus.

PHOTO: STOPRACISMUUCSD.WORDPRESS.COM

contributes to the continuous cycle that prevents underrepresented communities from entering the university. For students of color, queer-identified students, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds, this has been a continuous struggle to validate our own presence at the university academically and socially.”

The preface also expresses support for the struggle of Latino/a students to have a Chicano mural placed on campus and for the struggle of Native American students to repatriate ancestral remains found on campus.

Prominent among the students’ demands is the insistence that serious attention be paid to and funds found for recruitment and retention programs that focus on students of color, the disadvantaged, first generation students and, in general, historically underrepresented populations. There must also be, the students continue, “strong institutional support for academic programs that contribute to an improved campus climate.”

The statement concludes, “We demand that the administration respond to these demands on March 4th. ... We expect all of administration to be out on Library Walk on that Thursday to state their message on these demands while allowing the students to respond back.”

Almost daily protests on campus and statements of support for and solidarity with African Americans have come from many student groups, including the Chicano campus organization MEChA, medical,

fine arts and lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer students, and campus staff and professors.

At a student rally Feb. 24 preceding the teach-in organized by the school administration, David Richerson, the Black Student Union chairperson at UCSD, announced a state of emergency “to address the hostile and toxic environment on campus.”

Solidarity with Chile’s people

Workers World newspaper extends its solidarity to the working class and the people of Chile, who are suffering the consequences of an enormously powerful earthquake and tsunami that struck near the city of Concepción on Feb. 27, killing at least 800 people and leaving 2 million homeless.

To counter the corporate media’s misre-

Following that rally, an overflow crowd estimated at more than 2,000, and including students from other area schools and from as far away as Los Angeles, gathered at the site of the administration-organized teach-in. It turned out to be basically a long-winded, academic discussion of institutional racism and how to combat it. Midway through the program, an angry walkout led by Black students and their supporters left only a few hundred in the hall.

Fnann Keflezighi, vice chairwoman of the Black Student Union, spoke at a student rally following the walkout and denounced the teach-in as an attempt by the administration to silence the students. She expressed disbelief that the school administration really intended to do anything significant to rid the campus of racism and pointed out that there has been a long history of racial tension on the campus.

Two days later, following the discovery of the noose hanging in the campus library, there was another student rally and a takeover of the chancellor’s office. Several professors have called for the campus to be shut down until the safety of students of color can be guaranteed. As of March 1, students plan to continue meeting with the school administration to pressure for full implementation of their demands. □

porting of these events, WW is publishing on its website the declaration of Chile’s Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). This statement gives an on-the-spot description and analysis of both the consequences of the disaster and the inequalities in Chilean society that the earthquake has exposed. See www.workers.org. □

Demanding immigrant rights



San Diego

Immigrant communities and their allies are organizing resistance nationwide in the face of stubborn government inaction on the issue of immigrant rights and continuing acts of anti-immigrant terrorism on the part of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The demand for full legal equality is being voiced repeatedly in the U.S./Mexico border county of San Diego.

On Feb. 14 a local church near downtown San Diego organized a pro-immigrant rights march of parishioners following religious services. On Feb. 22 the first of a series of community meetings, organized by the San Diego American Friends Service Committee and hosted by various community organizations, took place. Co-sponsored by the Lincoln Social Justice Parent Committee, a packed classroom of community residents listened carefully as AFSC spokesperson Christian Ramirez

called for mass action to win immigrant rights. More such community meetings are scheduled in the coming weeks. On Feb. 28 a protest called by the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations drew immigrant rights supporters to a rally at the downtown Federal Building.

Last spring several Latino/a students on their way to school were arrested by ICE and deported to Tijuana, Mexico, where they knew no one. The community’s outrage was undoubtedly a deciding factor in the recent decision in the students’ cases. Local immigration attorney Lilia Velasquez announced Feb. 24 that a federal judge had ruled that he didn’t have jurisdiction because of discrepancies with the charging documents. So the children can continue their lives on this side of the border for now — and for the future, too, if the people have anything to say about it!

— Report and photo by Gloria Verdieu



— Photo and report by Jimmy Raynor

U.S./NATO offensive unravels in Afghanistan

By Sara Flounders

The Pentagon offensive against the Afghan city of Marjah was public-relations media hype from the very first day. The sole purpose of the offensive in Marjah was to convince the U.S. population and increasingly tepid NATO allies that this imperialist war is winnable.

U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is now the longest foreign war in U.S. history, on both the air and the ground. The Pentagon described the Marjah offensive as the biggest military operation in more than eight years of occupation, but now calls it a prelude to a larger assault on the city of Kandahar.

In U.S. counterinsurgency warfare, such an offensive means dropping heavily armed troops in an area seeking to draw enemy fire. The troops then call in air support, long-range artillery fire, machine-gun fire, rockets, white phosphorous bombs and anti-personnel bombs. The latter cover the ground with bomblets that emit thousands of razor-sharp fragments.

Tens of thousands of civilians were driven from the villages of Helmand Province, and the town of Marjah was partially evacuated. But thousands of Afghans were unwilling to leave their homes and animals in the cold of winter for the hunger, instability and flimsy shelter of refugee camps. Many are too poor to leave. They ended up as targets of Pentagon weapons.

The Marjah offensive’s stated goal was

to introduce a ready-made, U.S.-created local regime, staffed by an Afghan puppet administration totally dependent on U.S. power. With cynical and racist arrogance, NATO commander Gen. Stanley McChrystal said, “We got a government in a box ready to roll in.” (New York Times, Feb. 12)

Afghan casualties unrecorded

Throughout this war, the Pentagon and corporate media have never counted and scarcely mentioned Afghan civilian deaths, injuries and trauma from bombings, fires and destruction. Tens of thousands more die of starvation, cold and infections in crowded refugees camps, swollen cities and isolated villages.

During the U.S. offensive in Marjah, U.S. deaths in Afghanistan reached the milestone of 1,000. This total confirms that youth are paying the price of the lack of education and job opportunities in the U.S. In addition, suicides among returning soldiers now exceed combat deaths and injuries are about four times the deaths.

Gen. Barry McCaffrey at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point warned of sharp increases in U.S. troop casualties in the months ahead. “What I want to do is signal that this thing is going to be \$5 billion to \$10 billion a month and 300 to 500 killed and wounded a month by next summer. That’s what we probably should expect.” (Army Times, Jan. 7)

As the two-week offensive officially

ended in Marjah, bombs exploded in one of the most secure areas of Kabul. Some reporters described it as a sophisticated and well-coordinated operation in the heavily guarded capital. A car bomb targeted housing of employees from countries connected to the occupation, apparently with the aim of undermining international support for the Afghan war.

During the offensive came the announcement on Feb. 21 that the Netherlands coalition government had fallen apart, due to heated opposition of a coalition party to keeping Dutch troops in Afghanistan. This sealed the planned withdrawal of 2,000 Dutch troops from NATO forces in Afghanistan, as of next August.

The Netherlands was the first NATO member to announce that it is quitting. The announcement was a big setback for the U.S. and NATO, and has prompted wide media speculation of other possible NATO withdrawals from the deeply unpopular war.

A Los Angeles Times editorial on Feb. 24 stated that the Dutch “withdrawal is likely to raise concerns about a fracturing of the international commitment to Afghanistan, and about the Afghan government’s ability to provide security in the long term . . . The Dutch decision should serve as a warning to the Obama administration.”

The majority of the people in almost all the NATO countries opposes the war and wants their troops out. This has become a major issue in domestic politics and elec-

tions in many countries. Canada has announced the withdrawal of its forces by the summer of 2011.

Anti-war mood undermines NATO militarism

Following the Dutch announcement, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in a speech at the National Defense University told NATO officers and officials that public and political opposition to the military had grown so great in Europe that it was directly affecting operations in Afghanistan and impeding the alliance’s broader goals. “The demilitarization of Europe — where large swaths of the general public and political class are averse to military force and the risks that go with it — has gone from a blessing in the 20th century to an impediment. . . . Right now the alliance faces very serious, long-term, systemic problems.” (New York Times, Feb. 24)

Gates also reminded NATO officials that, not counting U.S. forces, NATO troops in Afghanistan were scheduled to increase to 50,000 this year — from 30,000 last year.

The total 43-country International Security Assistance Force, including U.S. soldiers, is presently at 140,000 troops in Afghanistan.

As journalist Rick Rozoff summed up a year ago: “The Afghan war is also the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s first armed conflict outside of Europe and its first ground war in the 60 years of its existence. It has been waged with the partici-

Indigenous peoples lead resistance Olympics protests slam poverty, injustice

By Mahtowin

Despite extensive media coverage of the recent Winter Olympics games in Vancouver, British Columbia, most television viewers outside Canada did not hear about the resistance to the games and the many protests that took place in Vancouver and elsewhere.

More than 12,000 police and security personnel turned Vancouver into a police state during the games, and progressive activists from Indigenous and other communities were harassed prior to the Olympics. The intense security presence and repression were no doubt a national dress rehearsal for this summer’s G-8 summit in Huntsville, Ontario, and the G-20 summit in Toronto.

The Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC), government and business leaders sought to show the world a post-card-perfect city complete with happy, cooperative Indians. To counter this, thousands of protesters took to the streets in an effort to rip the mask off the false image of Vancouver. Activists attempted to expose the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples — First Nations, Métis and Inuit — and focus attention on poverty and injustice in Canada.

Before the games even began, the Olympic torch relay was disrupted in more than 30 cities and First Nation territories. On Feb. 12, the day of the opening ceremonies, thousands of people marched in a “Take Back Our City” demonstration that was led by Indigenous elders and included activists from many backgrounds.

On Feb. 13, the first full day of competition, Vancouver woke up to a “Heart Attack” demonstration that clogged the streets and disrupted business as usual. Some of the protesters targeted the Hudson Bay Co. store, the primary purveyor



of Olympic souvenirs and a long-time symbol of the devastation of nature and expropriation of wealth from Canada’s land and Indigenous peoples.

The high cost of games

Hosting the Olympics is an expensive endeavor. Montreal, which hosted the 1976 Summer Games, incurred a \$1 billion debt that took three decades to pay off. The debt for the Vancouver Olympics is expected to be much higher, around \$6 billion. This comes at a time when social programs, housing and education are being drastically slashed. The province of British Columbia has immense natural resources and wealth, but it also has the highest child poverty rate in Canada.

Although VANOC claimed that the Vancouver games would be “green” and sustainable, the actual environmental impact was devastating. Tens of thousands of trees were cut down. Mountains were blasted for an Olympic venue in Whistler and for a highway expansion. Millions of salmon died in the Fraser River because of the huge amount of gravel mined there to make concrete needed for construction projects.

British Columbia consists largely of unceded Indigenous territories. A fraudulent treaty process is underway, but the government continues to sell, lease and develop Native lands to corporations, including mining, logging, oil and gas pipelines, and resorts. Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples suffer the highest rates of poverty, unemployment, imprisonment, police violence and disease in Canada.

VANOC and Olympics sponsors such as the Royal Bank of Canada spread a lot of money around to be able to ensure some degree of First Nations cooperation, and some members of First Nations communities — desperate for jobs and any level of economic development — hoped to benefit temporarily from the Olympics. Nonetheless, many Indigenous people opposed the games.

Harriet Nahanee inspires activists

Anti-Olympics organizing began well in advance of 2010. Early Indigenous resistance resulted in the 2007 death of elder Harriet Nahanee, a 71-year-old Pacheedaht activist, who was sent to jail for refusing to apologize to a court for protesting the expansion of the Sea-to-Sky Highway

at Eagleridge Bluffs — construction that would lay the path for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Nahanee, ill with flu and asthma at the time she was imprisoned, was reportedly told, “You can see a psychiatrist,” when she asked for medical care. She died shortly after her release from prison.

A survivor of the program that once made Native children leave their communities and go to residential schools, Harriet Nahanee fought for the recognition of Aboriginal land rights and the protection of the environment. She also fought against discrimination and the marginalization of First Nations people in cities like Vancouver. Many Native youth have said that their anti-Olympics and other activism were inspired by this magnificent elder.

Nahanee was not the only grandmother to be jailed for opposing the Olympics. A white environmental activist in her 70s, Betty Krawczyk, was arrested at the same time as Nahanee. She served seven months in prison in 2007 for ignoring a court order that forbade her from further demonstrations at Eagleridge Bluffs.

Women, homeless fight back

Modern Olympics often cause the displacement of poor people in host cities, and Vancouver was no exception. Homelessness nearly tripled as a result of new construction and the destruction of low-income housing units. Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES) area was heavily impacted. Many of the homeless population in Vancouver are Indigenous; it’s a magnet city for people from impoverished reserves where there are few jobs.

Prior to the Olympics, Vancouver criminalized begging for money, sleeping outdoors and other activities commonly engaged in by homeless or economically marginalized people. New city benches

pation of armed units from all 26 NATO member states and 12 other European and Caucasus nations linked to NATO. ...

“The 12 European NATO partners who have sent troops in varying numbers to assist Washington and the Alliance include the continent’s five former neutral nations: Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland. The European NATO and partnership deployments count among their number troops from six former Soviet Republics — with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine tapped for recent reinforcements and the three Baltic states ... including airbases and troop and naval deployments in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and the Indian Ocean (where the Japanese navy has been assisting).” (rickrozoff.wordpress.com, March 25, 2009)

Military units from Australia, New Zealand, Jordan, Colombia and South Korea are also stationed in Afghanistan.

Afghans have right to resist

Despite all these occupation forces, Afghanistan has become an imperialist quagmire with no stability, no security and no end in sight.

The resistance in Afghanistan has gained ground and broad support as it becomes clear to the whole population that U.S./NATO forces have brought only racist arrogance, corruption, repression and greater poverty. While occupation forces label all resistance as terrorism and Taliban-inspired, increasingly Afghans see resistance as a right and a patriotic or religious duty. It is essential in the period ahead that the anti-war movement supports the right of the Afghan people to resist this criminal occupation and increases the effort to bring all troops home now. □

were designed so people could not lie down on them.

On Feb. 15 hundreds marched through the streets of downtown Vancouver against militarization and the Olympics police state. That same day, homeless people, housing organizers and others set up a tent city in DTES. Organizer Harsha Walia said activists will stay there for an indefinite time, and she’s not worried that they are not permitted to do so.

At the start of the march Walia told the crowd the games have accelerated gentrification in the DTES and that police are harassing area residents. “Every day you walk down this block you see the police beat people down,” she said. “The 2010 Olympics is leading to the criminalization of homelessness.” She was speaking in front of a banner depicting fuzzy Olympic mascots surrounded by flames, skulls, \$100 bills and swastikas. (theprovince.com)

Large events such as the Olympics lead to increased exploitation of women. Although not part of the overall anti-Olympics protests, the annual Women’s Memorial March took place Feb. 14 during the games. This grassroots march honors murdered and missing women — a disproportionate number of them Indigenous — from across Canada. Vancouver’s march had about 5,000 participants, and there were sister marches in Calgary, Montreal and other cities. March organizers and families believe that authorities in Canada do not take seriously the murders of Indigenous women.

Information for this article was compiled from an interview with a protest participant and from Web sites, including theprovince.com, the National Post, Canadian Press, the Straight, no2010.com and YouTube.

African Decade of Women (2010-2020)

Focus on gender equality, national development

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A major initiative aimed at achieving gender equality in Africa is under way. The African Women’s Decade — 2010-2020 — has been adopted by the African Union, the continental organization that encompasses 53 member states.

This decade of struggle was initiated by the Women and Gender Development Directorate of the AU. A series of declarations, protocols and conventions have been adopted over the last several years aimed at achieving the full representation of women in the politics and national economies on the continent.

One such resolution, the Solemn Declaration, urges AU member states to carry out programs to end violence against women. On Jan. 30 the AU began the Africa Unite Campaign to end Violence Against Women.

In preparation for the official launching of the African Women’s Decade on Oct. 15, also World Rural Women’s Day, the AU’s Women Gender and Development Directorate offered courses from Feb. 8 to Feb. 19 at the Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The two-week courses were offered in both English and French.

These courses involved 25 delegates from Ministries of Gender, Finance and Economic Development of various member states and included advanced theoretical and practical tools designed to fully integrate gender issues into the overall economic policies on the African continent.

The WGDD document states about the objectives of the Decade of Women: “To date the women of Africa, like women elsewhere, have not been included as full, equal and effective stakeholders in processes that determine their lives. For example, women continue to have less access to education than men; they continue to have less employment and advancement opportunities; their role and contribution to national and continental development processes are neither recognized nor rewarded; they continue to be absent from decision-making; and, although they bear the brunt of conflicts, women are generally not included in peace negotiations or other initiatives in this regard.” (African Union, March 1, 2010)

Current status of women in Africa

Even though the legacies of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism created extreme social inequalities for women on the African continent and throughout the Diaspora, significant progress has been made over the last two decades including the electoral arena.

A Feminists for Choice blog states: “Liberia inaugurated Africa’s first female president in 2006. Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was a leader in her country’s peace movement. She defeated a soccer star with nearly 60 percent of the vote. In other African nations, women make up a significant part of their governments. Rwanda leads all nations in this regard with 48.8 percent of its parliament being women. Other African nations with high percentages of women in government include Mozambique at 34.8 percent, South Africa at 32.8 percent and Tanzania at 30.4 percent. It makes our government (U.S.) seem quite inadequate on the gender equity frontlines. In the U.S. Congress, women only hold 17 percent of the seats.” (http://tinyurl.com/yzrku8q)

These gains stem from the policy initia-

tives proposed by various women’s organizations on the African continent that have been adopted by governments and the AU. National mechanisms have been established designed to mainstream women’s issues into the policies, plans and programs of government.

Nonetheless, these mechanisms for the full integration of women into government and national economic decision-making processes have been stalled as a result of the lack of funding as well as continuing resistance by male-dominated state structures that are reinforced by the world imperialist system. The current global economic crisis has disproportionately affected Africa and consequently the status of women.

The rise in food prices, the decline in export earnings for commodities and the impact of climate change have impacted African women severely. In sub-Saharan African states, the production of agricultural commodities make up 21 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and women are responsible for between 60 percent and 80 percent of the food supply. Yet the income generated by this economic activity is not equitably distributed to women.

Mary Wandia said in a recent article: “While states have failed to fulfill their commitments, they are undermining regional and international standards by introducing anti-human-rights bills. Several governments have adopted or are in the process of adopting discriminatory legislation reversing fundamental women’s rights including, but not limited to, bills on criminalization of HIV, indecent dressing laws and anti-homosexuality bills. These bills violate various rights: the right to privacy and confidentiality, the right to sexual integrity and autonomy, the right to bodily integrity, freedom from discrimination, the right to health, the right to equal protection before the law, freedom of association, sexual and reproductive rights, freedom of choice, the right to life, etc.” (Pambazuka News, Nov. 19, 2009)

In regard to land redistribution policy, the contradiction between the stated aims of gender equality and the continuing role of customary law has hampered the efforts to improve the status of women. A recent thesis submitted by Annika Rudman at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, studied the impact of land reform in post-apartheid South Africa and ownership rights under traditional cultural norms within the society.

Rudman says: “Taking as my starting point the new constitution, which came into force in 1997, I have examined the function and status of customary law in South African land reform, and have attempted to highlight the legal problems many black South African women have to deal with when they try to gain access to land through the new system.” (The Namibian, Feb. 26)

According to Rudman, traditional leaders have an important role to play in the land redistribution process by ensuring that customary law does not conflict with national governmental policy. The racist apartheid system allocated 87 percent of the productive land to the European settlers and relegated the most arid remaining land to the African population that constituted the overwhelming majority of people.

The legal analyses by Rudman point to the relationship between land reform and



the elimination of poverty among women. Her thesis places land redistribution within the context of national development. She asserts that laws must develop that mandate gender equality in line with the 1997 post-apartheid constitution.

In neighboring Namibia, which was under the control of apartheid South Africa prior to 1990, the government will soon ratify the international convention on equal wages for men and women. A resolution passed by the cabinet on Feb. 9 states, “Convention 100 [of the International Labor Organization] on Equal Remuneration of 1951 is the only ILO core convention that Namibia has not yet ratified.” (Namibian Ministry of Information statement)

This convention has been ratified by all of the member states of the regional organization, the Southern African Development Community, as well as 44 other African states and 167 nations around the world.

African women and reconstruction

Africa cannot effectively challenge and overcome centuries of exploitation and oppression without the liberation of women being a central aspect of the struggle for genuine political freedom and economic independence. At the recent Socialist Forum of Ghana, this notion was emphasized in light of the ongoing challenges posed by neo-colonialism, where Western imperialism continues to dominate the economic and political life on the continent.

In a Feb. 25 talk at the Forum, Dr. Dzo-di Tsikata said: “The African woman will spearhead the march towards the New African that Dr. Nkrumah had evoked on the eve of Ghana’s political independence in 1957, the ‘New African’ who is conscious of the African personality. This concept is not associated with a particular state, language, religion, political system, or color of skin. It takes account of our diversity, the influence of Christianity, Islam and our African Traditions in our societies today.” (Ghana News Agency, Feb. 26)

Dr. Tsikata spoke in commemoration of the centenary celebrations marking the birth of former President Kwame Nkrumah and the 44th anniversary of the right-wing U.S.-engineered coup in 1966 against the socialist first Republic headed by Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party.

According to Dr. Tsikata: “The call for economic self-reliance, social justice, national cohesion, and greater continental integration is relevant now because sustainable economic development that impacts on us with special economic development is still out of reach. This reawakening, therefore, cannot happen without the active participation of African women in policy decisions.”

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Nightmare for Katrina survivors, revisited

The images have been embedded in people's consciousnesses forever: thousands of Katrina survivors — the vast majority African-American and indigent — languishing in front of the Convention Center in New Orleans waiting for food, clean water and other humanitarian needs to be met in devastating heat. Any help seemed like a lifetime to come due mainly to racist, governmental neglect on the part of the Bush administration after the hurricane initially hit the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29, 2005. Dead bodies inhabited the same space as the living.

Many of those survivors had once lived in the Lower Ninth Ward where compromised levees totally flooded the predominantly African-American neighborhood during Katrina. As a result, more than 1,000 people lost their lives in that neighborhood alone.

One important image that the mainstream media played down during this tragic event occurred on Sept. 4, 2005. On that day, as hundreds of Katrina survivors were crossing east over the Danziger bridge seeking food and water, the New Orleans police, out of uniform and without any warning, jumped out of a rental truck and starting shooting nonstop at unarmed people.

Once the firing stopped, six people had been shot, two fatally. Those killed were Ronald Madison, a 40-year-old mentally disabled man, and 19-year-old James Brissette. The police claimed to have been shot at first and then fired back in self-defense. One autopsy exposed the ugly truth that Madison was shot seven times — in the back. One victim, Susan Bartholomew, had her right arm completely shot off.

Madison's brother, Romell, was arrested on eight counts of attempted murder. The charges were eventually dismissed, but only after he spent time in jail. More than a year later on Dec. 28, 2006, seven cops were indicted for murder and attempted murder charges, but the charges were eventually dismissed by a state court in 2008.

On Feb. 24, 2010, a retired New Orleans police lieutenant pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiracy to obstruct justice in the Sept. 4 shootings. Lt. Michael Lohman had been appointed as supervisor of the investigation of the shootings and admitted before a federal court that he had known that the police attacked unarmed New Orleans residents. It is unclear if this admission of guilt will lead to the arrests of higher officials within the New Orleans police department.

While it is certainly understandable why relatives of the shooting victims will feel some semblance of justice with this admission of guilt, these shootings are only the tip of the iceberg regarding countless other acts of racist police atrocities during and especially before Katrina hit.

On Sept. 1, 2005, police prevented Black people from leaving New Orleans by shooting above their heads when they attempted to cross the Crescent City Connection Bridge to enter the mainly white parishes of Gretna and Jefferson to escape the flooding.

On Sept. 2, 2005, Henry Glover, another unarmed Black man, was shot to death by the New Orleans police. His corpse was placed in his car and torched by the police. Black people accused of "looting"

after being displaced by Katrina were shot down by the police while it has been confirmed that the police were justified in stealing from stores.

All of these incidents point to the New Orleans police having a sordid history of state repression against the Black community. In a December 2007 United Nations study entitled "In the Shadows of the War on Terror: Persistent Police Brutality and Abuse of Peoples of Color in the United States," NGOs describe New Orleans as "a police state encampment, occupied by an estimated 14,000 heavily armed government officers and their machine guns, patrolled by military trucks, armored Humvees, Black Hawks and Chinooks." In the same study, Safe Streets/Strong Communities found that "72 percent of the predominantly (80 percent) African-American respondents who had been stopped by police reported being victimized, be it through verbal abuse, public strip searches, or physical abuse."

New Orleans is no exception. In order for the police departments to protect the private property and profits of the capitalists, they must simultaneously repress and terrorize the workers and oppressed with guns, tasers, billy clubs and other military hardware to avert any righteous rebellions. What happened on the Danziger Bridge in 2005 and other related acts of police terror was meant to send a clear message to the displaced Black Katrina survivors: Don't bother to come back, because New Orleans is being rebuilt for the white elite and tourists. Consider the fact that New Orleans, a predominantly Black city, elected a white mayor this past February, the first since the late 1970s.

For real justice to be served for the victims of the September 2005 police conspiracy, the tens of thousands of displaced Katrina survivors must be allowed to return to New Orleans to rebuilt homes and levees, union-wage jobs, decent public schools and health care, along with community control of the police. □

'Free the Morong 43'

Continued from page 4

Present was Melissa Roxas, who was illegally arrested at gunpoint last spring by the Philippine military, then interrogated and tortured for six days.

Roxas, who had been a volunteer health worker, explained, "All the 43 health workers did was to serve the poor and the most vulnerable in society and they filled a great need that the Philippine government was not able to provide.

"I know what it feels like to be detained and tortured. No human being should have to go through that. The situation is critical. Every day that [they] are not released, it is one more day they have to endure of pain, fear and torture. We demand [their] immediate release. We need to help stop human rights' violations in the Philippines." (BAYAN-USA press statement, Feb. 24)

The California activists called upon the U.S. government to take action. Rev. Sandra Richards, who was in the recent UMC delegation to the Philippines, said, "The United States is widely seen as a partner in the Philippine military, and is a funder."

International League of People's Strug-

Latin America and Caribbean 32 countries agree to build independent bloc

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

The latest effort in the process of regional integration of the Latin American and Caribbean countries took place on Feb. 22-23 in Cancún, Mexico, with the participation of 32 independent nations.

The new organization, called the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CLACS), is an attempt to create a body that would not include the United States or Canada, in order to establish an independent bloc that can respond to and pursue the interests of the region — not only among the member states at the hemisphere level, but in the international arena as well.

Of the 33 countries in the region, only Honduras was not invited. It was expelled from the Organization of American States last summer due to the criminal military coup of June 2009 that deposed the democratically elected president, José Manuel Zelaya.

CLACS is considered by many regional presidents as the alternative to the U.S.-dominated OAS. In fact, the failure of the OAS to respond in an effective manner, which could have reversed the Honduras coup, hastened the convening of the new Community. Most of the governments in CLACS have made it clear they consider the Honduran coup an immense danger that could set a new precedent of coups and destabilization processes in their countries, bringing back the era of military dictatorships that ravaged Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s.

The U.S. has increased its militarization of the region, expanding the Fourth Fleet, putting bases into Colombia and Panama, invading Haiti under the pretense of providing aid, and supporting the coup in Honduras. This is regarded as a real threat that cannot be left unchecked.

This new body is in some ways a continuation of the Rio Group, which initiated the new formation at its 21st summit, called the Unity Summit. Although the Rio Group will not cease to exist, at least not until CLACS is firmly established, both

entities will continue working side by side. The Rio Group itself was a continuation of the Contadora Group formed by Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela in the early 1980s in an effort to respond, as Latin American nations, to the U.S. wars then raging in Central America against Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Eventually, that group expanded, adding more Latin American and Caribbean nations until the 1990s, when it became the Rio Group.

CLACS is still only an attempt, an effort, without firm guidelines. These will be developed throughout the year, taking as a model the Cancún Declaration released at the end of the Summit. They will be discussed in the next meeting, to take place in Venezuela in 2011.

The declaration takes several aspects into consideration, including regional integration and cooperation. This focuses on a concerted response to the financial crisis, including the call to build a new international financial body that would be more democratic; regional mechanisms for trade and exchange using their own or a common currency rather than the dollar; promoting the integration of their economies, and stimulating trade among themselves.

Other matters to be addressed include energy, infrastructure, migration, science and technology, social development including efforts towards the eradication of poverty and hunger, education, health and public services, culture, the inclusion of women in all areas of development, sustainable development, climate change, response to natural disasters, human rights, security, drug problems, terrorism and South-South cooperation.

There was significant discussion of the situation in Haiti in order to elevate cooperation with that beleaguered country and ensure its long-term development.

Another important decision was a unanimous condemnation of the British occupation and militarization of the Malvinas Islands, which Britain calls the Falklands. Although it was not part of the Cancún Declaration, in a separate document the countries supported Argentina's right to the Malvinas, calling for a discussion in the United Nations.

In a recent arrogant imperialist move, Britain unilaterally approved exploration for future oil extraction in the waters surrounding the Malvinas, where there is an estimated reserve of 60 billion barrels of crude oil. Despite Argentina's protests, the British have continued their plans for exploration.

Despite all the contradictions and inconsistencies that can arise in a community that includes anti-imperialist countries with a socialist perspective — such as Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia — together with strong U.S. allies such as Colombia, Panama, Peru and Costa Rica, the fact is that it does represent a viable effort to act independently of the imperialists, particularly U.S. imperialism.

As Cuban President Raúl Castro said at the conclusion of the CLACS summit: "The decision that we have just adopted, creating the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, is historic. ... Cuba considers that the conditions exist to move quickly towards the establishment of a regional organization, purely Latin American and Caribbean, that integrates and represents the 33 independent nations of Latin America and the Caribbean." (Telesur.tv.net) □

gle activist Chito Quijano called for withholding U.S. tax dollars from the Philippines while the detainees are held in a "Guantanamo-like prison."

Progressive forces in the Philippines have denounced the government's martial law tactics against these workers and others, whom they label as insurgents to justify the military's brutality.

Only after public pressure mounted, and detainees' families submitted a writ of habeas corpus to the Philippine Supreme Court, did the army bring the 43 prisoners to the Court of Appeals in Manila on Feb. 15. They were then returned to Camp Capinpin after brief testimony.

Although a court ruling was due Feb. 24 on the legality of the arrests, not a word has been issued.

On March 1, the International Association of People's Lawyers called on Philippine President Gloria Magapagal-Arroyo to immediately free the Morong 43.

For information on how to join in solidarity actions and protest statements, see BAYANUSA.org and freethehealthworkers.blogspot.com. Sign the petition at petitiononline.com/Free43/. □

Euro crisis

Greek workers say: ‘Let the rich pay’

By John Catalinotto

A second general strike in two weeks shows that Greek workers are standing up to the bosses’ and bankers’ attempt to force them to pay the costs of a problem the workers had no responsibility for creating: the capitalist economic crisis. This determined resistance is what’s behind the headlines on the financial pages about the euro’s stability and European Union negotiations with the Greek regime.

Two million Greek workers stayed away from their jobs on Feb. 24. Factories, offices, large retail stores, seaports and airports were closed. Workers and youths took to the streets in 70 cities throughout Greece. “Reject the government plan, the rich should pay for the crisis,” read the banner leading the demonstration in Athens.

The militant mood on the street contrasted with the discussions among bank boards of directors, government officials and the capitalist-controlled media throughout the European Union. The EU itself is an instrument of big business, a coalition of capitalists arrayed against the European working class and the nations in the former colonial world. Its ruling-class media try to portray the Greek people in general, especially the workers, as unwilling to work hard and make the necessary sacrifices — to save the capitalist economy.

Europe’s financial bosses are insisting that before they will “bail out” the Greek government with loans, it must impose an even harsher austerity on the workers than the taxes, wage cuts, hiring freezes, and increase in retirement age and social-service cutbacks already proposed. They aim to force the government to crack down on the workers — using the excuse that this is needed to overcome the financial crisis. They then want to impose cutbacks on workers throughout the EU, even in countries where the debt prob-

lems are less critical.

U.S. bankers are also part of the mix. Goldman Sachs arranged large parts of the Greek debt and expects the Greek government to squeeze its debt payments from the Greek workers.

Greece has a social democratic government led by Prime Minister George Papandreou of the PASOK party. Many workers voted for it precisely to avoid this vicious attack, but PASOK has instead led the offensive against them. Unlike its capitalist overlords in Berlin and Brussels, PASOK has to directly confront the Greek workers’ growing anger.

A half-million workers had struck on Feb. 10, called out by the PAME union federation, which is close to the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). This time the GSEE union federation and other unions closer to the social democrats joined the strike, many walking out for the first time, and some joined the PAME-led marches. (inter.kke.gr)

Their placards read: “Here is the money: the deposits of the enterprises in 2004 were 36 billion euros; in 2009, 136 billion euros. 250,000 workers receive a salary of 740 euros [approximately \$1,000 per month]. At the same time, 700 billion euros are in the pockets of the big enterprises.” (inter.kke.gr)

A refreshing aspect of the Greek protests is that the speakers and slogans reject the ruling-class argument that “joint sacrifice” is needed from the population. By “joint sacrifice,” the bankers mean that workers must give up pay, benefits and often their jobs, in order to rescue the profits and debt payments to the rulers.

They argue that these sacrifices will restore the capitalist economy. But, just as in the U.S., official unemployment in the EU has grown to just under 10 percent, and whatever capitalist recovery has tak-



IX PHOTO: KKE

en place has also been jobless. The Greek workers say that if sacrifices are needed to save capitalism, then “Let the rich pay!”

This attitude is spreading. In Spain, where official unemployment is 19 percent, two of the union federations, the CCOO and the UGT, protested in Madrid on Feb. 23 against the government’s austerity plans. In Portugal a one-day general strike of the public sector rejecting an extension of the wage freeze is planned for March 4. Both countries have Socialist Party governments, but these social democrats are carrying out severe attacks on the workers.

French and German working-class re-

Sarkozy in Haiti

Demands for reparations greet French president

By G. Dunkel

Recently, a French head of state visited Haiti for the first time since 1803. That’s when Napoleon’s army was decisively beaten at the Battle of Vertières by an army of ex-slaves who displayed exceptional valor and determination. Vertières was an especially humiliating defeat because the racist and colonialist French ruling class did not believe an army of Black people either kidnapped or born into subjugation, could defeat veteran French soldiers in hand-to-hand combat.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy dropped in on Haiti for less than four hours on Feb. 17. He saw the earthquake devastation from a helicopter, made a speech in the gardens outside the ruined National Palace while Haitian President René Préval looked on, and then headed to Martinique and Guadeloupe, French colonial possessions in the Caribbean, and Guyana.

Thousands of protesters organized by Fanmi Lavalas, the party of exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, showed up at the National Palace shortly after word of Sarkozy’s visit got out. They carried signs demanding restitution of the \$21.69 billion (as of 2003) that France extorted from Haiti in 1825, as well as reparations for the two centuries of French slavery and all the violence and misery that flowed from that.

They also demanded the return of former President Aristide and chanted, “Down with Préval!” Some signs read, “Nicolas Sarkozy, slavery and colonialism are worse than the catastrophe of January 12.” (La Presse, Feb. 18)

France deliberately adopted a genocidal strategy against the Haitian people



PHOTO: HAITI LIBERTÉ

from 1792 to 1803, a genocide that failed only because the army carrying it out was crushed. But under King Charles X, France sent its fleet to Haiti in 1825 to extort 150 million gold francs as payment for the “property” — that is to say, the enslaved human beings and the land — its citizens had lost with the success of the Haitian Revolution. This debt was so crushing that it took 122 years for Haiti to repay it completely.

Despite this history, Sarkozy had the gall to say, “Between our two countries, the ties are intense, family-like, but as in every family there have been some very painful moments.”

The French leader raised the issue of interimperialist rivalry when he spoke against putting Haiti under “tutelage,” a 21st-century version of a “protectorate.” He said, “To those who ... embrace the idea of an international tutelage over Haiti, I say this: The Haitian people are battered, the Haitian people are exhausted but the Haitian people are standing tall.”

Sarkozy seemed to have forgotten that his predecessor and compatriot Jacques Chirac cooperated fully with the United States and Canada in the coup-kidnapping of President Aristide and in placing Haiti under the “tutelage” of a United Nations occupation. □

‘With nails and teeth’

Workers protest throughout Spain

By Caleb T. Maupin

On Feb. 23, massive demonstrations took place across Spain; 70,000 took to the streets in Madrid, 50,000 marched in Barcelona and tens of thousands more joined in ten other cities. The country’s two leading unions organized these actions to protest Prime Minister Jose Luis Zapatero’s proposed labor law reforms, especially the plan to raise the retirement age from 65 to 67.

The General Union of Workers (UGT) mobilized across the country. The UGT is tied to the social-democratic Socialist Workers Party of Spain, of which Zapatero is a member, and which dominates the Spanish government. The Workers Commissions (CCOO) also organized; this massive union is influenced by the Communist Party of Spain. The CCOO raised the slogan, “We are going to defend with nails and teeth the labor and social rights of the present and future pensioners,” as a rallying cry to promote and build the protests throughout Spain.

These were the first large-scale union protests to be mounted against Zapatero’s government since the prime minister took office in 2004.

Spain has been hit by the capitalist global financial crisis and has a large

deficit and huge unemployment. Zapatero had announced 50 billion euros in budget cuts and many “reforms,” which are assaults on workers’ benefits and protections. The government claims the pension cutback will stimulate the economy and beef up funds in the pension system. Moreover, it is clearly following the dictates of the European Union, whose chief, Jose Manuel Barroso, told all EU member states — before the protests took place — to raise retirement ages on pensions.

A poll conducted by El Pais, a major newspaper in Madrid, showed that 84 percent of Spain’s population did not support raising the retirement age or any of the government’s other proposed austerity measures. Workers are angry at the government’s so-called pension reforms and reject the premise that preventing workers from retiring will help to curb the country’s unemployment rate; it is already nearly 20 percent, with youth unemployment at 40 percent.

Fifty-seven more protests are planned to take place throughout Spain until March 6, to keep up the pressure on the government. Many workers have called for a general strike to push the government to stop assaults on their pensions and other attacks on their livelihoods. □

Después de más de una década de lucha

Agricultores africano-americanos ganan indemnización

Por Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor de Pan-African News Wire

El 18 de febrero, el Departamento de Agricultura de EEUU (USDA por las siglas en inglés) anunció la reciente resolución para proporcionar indemnización y recursos a los agricultores africano-americanos. Una organización que representa a los agricultores africano-americanos, la Federación de Cooperativas del Sur / Fondo de Ayuda de Tierra- fundada en 1967, acogió con satisfacción el acuerdo anunciado.

En febrero se celebraron manifestaciones en apoyo a las demandas presentadas por los agricultores africano-americanos que buscan poner fin a la pérdida de tierras y a las políticas racistas de la USDA que han obligado a millones de personas por décadas a abandonar las zonas rurales del sur. Hubo manifestaciones en Washington, DC; Little Rock, Arkansas; Memphis, Tennessee; Jackson, Mississippi; Montgomery, Alabama; Columbus, Georgia; Columbia, Carolina del Sur; y en Richmond, Virginia.

Los agricultores exigían una solución al acuerdo judicial de 1999 que debía proporcionar una compensación por las décadas de prácticas discriminatorias de la USDA. Sin embargo, la burocracia federal puso enormes obstáculos que impidieron que los agricultores recibieran los fondos de la resolución. Sólo 15.000 de los agricultores africano-americanos fueron capaces de navegar a través del complicado papeleo para cobrar la indemnización que según se informó, era apenas un promedio de \$50.000 por familia. La mayoría de los agricultores fueron excluidos, y en el 2008 el Congreso de EEUU reconoció que había problemas y concedió un plazo adicional para que otras 70.000 personas solicitaran la indemnización.

A pesar de este supuesto compromiso de acelerar la tramitación de solicitudes de indemnización, el Congreso recortó unos \$1,5 mil millones en financiamiento que el presidente Barack Obama había incluido en el primer presupuesto de la actual administración, diseñados específicamente para los agricultores negros. Obama ha incluido una cantidad similar en el presupuesto para el próximo año fiscal que está en marcha ante el Congreso.

Según el representante Mel Watt, del Partido Demócrata de Carolina del Norte, miembro del Caucus Negro del Congreso, “La cuestión principal ahora, creo, es que no hay dinero asignado al pago de los demandantes”. A pesar del hecho de que el Partido Demócrata controla ambas cámaras del Congreso, no hay ningún compromiso real para abordar los problemas de los agricultores africano-americanos.

En una manifestación fuera de la USDA el 15 de febrero, John Boyd, presidente de la Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Negros, trajo a los legisladores 538 mazorcas de maíz y paquetes de semillas de flores “No-Me-Olvides”, exigiendo que cada miembro/a de la Cámara de Representantes y del Senado incluya la suma de \$1,5 miles de millones en el presupuesto

de 2010 para la compensación. “Nuestro largo camino a la justicia debe ahora llegar a un feliz término”, dijo Boyd.

Boyd continuó diciendo: “Hemos sufrido muchas dificultades, esperado muchos años y viajado muchas millas. Ahora es el momento para que el Congreso haga su parte y proporcione equidad para los agricultores negros. Miles de agricultores que no pueden estar en Washington mostraron su apoyo al viajar largas distancias a través de la nieve y la lluvia para unirse a nuestras manifestaciones. Estamos aquí para representarlos y hacer que se cumpla el trabajo.” (PRWEB, 15 de feb.)

En una conferencia de prensa del 4 de febrero, el secretario de prensa de la Casa Blanca, Robert Gibbs, respondió a una pregunta relacionada con la difícil situación de los agricultores africano-americanos. Gibbs, dijo, “Claramente, es algo importante para él [Obama]. Ha sido un tema trabajado por el gobierno federal durante varias administraciones y que ha durado muchos años. Obviamente, el garantizar que se haga justicia es importante en esta situación”. (PRWEB, 15 de feb.)

La portavoz del fondo, Heather Gray dijo sobre la reciente resolución: “Tras años de negociaciones y preguntas, para los agricultores negros que nunca han podido resolver sus denuncias de discriminación contra el Departamento de Agricultura de Estados Unidos, por fin hay algo de esperanza. La administración de Obama y los abogados que representan a los agricultores negros han llegado a un acuerdo en la segunda fase de la demanda inicialmente presentada por los agricultores negros contra el USDA en 1999”. (The Federation/LAF, 18 de feb.)

Según el director ejecutivo del Fondo, Ralph Paige: “El acuerdo tan esperado en esta segunda fase de la demanda Pigford es un gran paso adelante. La suma de \$1,25 mil millones propuesta por la administración de Obama es un gran adelanto sobre los \$100 millones ofrecidos por el Congreso en la Ley Agrícola de 2008. Ahora hay esperanza de que los miles de agricultores negros cuyos casos han estado pendientes puedan recibir el dinero y recompensa por los daños después de décadas de discriminación”.

Una historia de discriminación y pérdida de tierras

La difícil situación de los agricultores africano-americanos no es en absoluto un fenómeno nuevo y las reclamaciones contra el gobierno federal no se originaron con la demanda presentada du-

rante la década de 1990. Este problema se deriva de la herencia de esclavitud, del fracaso de la reconstrucción y de las continuadas prácticas discriminatorias de la USDA y los bancos.

Aunque el movimiento abolicionista luchó por décadas para terminar con la esclavitud, tomaría una Guerra Civil sangrienta que duró cuatro años para colapsar esta institución arraigada en la explotación y opresión extrema de cuatro millones de personas de descendencia africana. La cuestión de cuáles provisiones serían otorgadas a los/as ex-esclavos/as, y también para los/as llamados/as africanos/as libres, fue discutida durante la guerra pero no fue dispuesta formalmente.

En 1862 algunos comandantes del ejército de la Unión comenzaron a dividir las plantaciones en las zonas liberadas del sur y proveyeron arreglos para pequeños agricultores africanos.

En 1865 la primera Ley de la Agencia de Hombres Liberados desarrolló planes para la venta de terrenos de 40 acres a los ex-esclavos a precios baratos. Estos terrenos hubieran sido de las plantaciones evacuadas y de las zonas que no estaban pobladas durante este período.

No obstante, a finales del 1865, el presidente Andrew Jackson paró estas iniciativas por el ejército de la Unión de repartir terrenos a los ex-esclavos. Otro acuerdo que fue establecido en 1866 también promulgó propuestas para la redistribución de tierras, pero a estas acciones les faltaba un mecanismo efectivo para su ejecución y consecuentemente apenas fueron implementadas.

Con la falta del compromiso por parte del gobierno para la redistribución de tierras en el sur, la adquisición de ranchos por africano-americanos tuvo lugar mayormente de forma individual. Muchos africano-americanos pudieron conseguir tierra como resultado de las terribles condiciones económicas prevalecientes en el sur después de la Guerra Civil.

En un estudio de Bruce J. Reynolds en 2002 titulado “Agricultores negros en América, 1865-2000: la búsqueda de la agricultura independiente y el rol de las cooperativas”, dice Reynolds que “W.E.B. DuBois estimó el progreso de la pertenencia de tierras por agricultores negros en el siglo 19 de la siguiente manera: 3 millones de acres en 1875, 8 millones en 1890, y 12 millones en 1900. El Censo de Agricultura muestra un aumento continuo del número de agricultores que eran dueños de tierra en el sur del 1880 al 1890 y otra vez en 1900, pero no distingue entre dueños

blancos y no blancos hasta el 1900. Las cifras del censo muestran que el 1920 fue el año con el máximo número de dueños no blancos de tierras agrícola en el sur. En términos de la cantidad de acres en propiedad, el censo muestra que el 1910 fue el año máximo en el sur. Más de 12,8 millones de acres eran propiedad completa o parcialmente respectivamente, de 175.290 y 43.177 agricultores no blancos”.

Sin embargo el ascenso de organizaciones terroristas como el Ku Klux Klan y el abandono de la reconstrucción por el gobierno federal dejaron a los agricultores africano-americanos y sus familias vulnerables a las campañas sistemáticas fomentadas por los racistas que forzaron a muchas personas a huir de sus ranchos violentamente y por la implementación de leyes estatales a favor de las élites que habían sido dueñas de esclavos. Este proceso continuaría en el siglo 20, resultando en la pérdida de millones de acres de tierra adquirida por africano-americanos en el sur.

Estos esfuerzos de sacar a los agricultores africano-americanos de sus tierras estaban combinados con la sistemática negación de crédito y por la adquisición por corporaciones de la tierra agrícola que ocurrió durante los últimos años del siglo 20. Más agricultores comenzaron a ver en la agricultura cooperativa una medida de mantener su subsistencia y su acceso a la tierra.

Sin embargo, como señala Reynolds: “La población de agricultores independientes está disminuyendo como resultado de la consolidación de granjas y también por los sistemas de contratación que disminuyen los requisitos de tomar decisiones por los agricultores. Mientras continúe esta tendencia, la utilidad de las cooperativas, así como la capacidad de los agricultores para organizarlas, disminuirán”.

Para el año 1992, el Censo de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos reportó que solo quedaban 18.000 agricultores africano-americanos y que la propiedad de tierras había menguado a 2,3 millones de acres. Desde los primeros años de la década de 1990 las condiciones para los agricultores africano-americanos han empeorado con la creciente crisis económica que ha afectado desproporcionadamente a los grupos nacionalmente oprimidos en los Estados Unidos.

El clamor de los agricultores africano-americanos forma una parte integral de la cuestión de opresión nacional en los Estados Unidos. Está íntimamente ligada a la crisis económica y a su impacto sobre los/as africano-americanos/as, resultando en la pérdida de millones de empleos y en ejecuciones hipotecarias. Consecuentemente, la lucha por la justicia para los agricultores africano-americanos debe incluirse junto a las otras demandas, incluyendo un verdadero programa de empleos para poner a trabajar a las decenas de millones de trabajadores/as que están sufriendo los efectos de la intensificación de la crisis económica en el sistema capitalista mundial. □

Libertad para los cinco cubanos



The Cuban Five: Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez and Fernando González Llort.